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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 003608

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PL

SUBJECT: SURROGATE MUD-SLINGING BACKFIRES ON KACZYNSKI
WHILE NEGOTIATIONS ON COALITION GOVERNMENT GO QUIETLY
FORWARD.

REF: WARSAW 3558 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Mary T. Curtin for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶11. (C) The presidential campaign of Law and Justice (PiS) candidate Lech Kaczynski seems to have suffered a blow when a surrogate's false attack on Civic Platform (PO) rival Donald Tusk backfired. PiS's self-described "bull terrier," Jacek Kurski charged publicly that Tusk's grandfather volunteered for the German Wehrmacht during World War II. In reality, both of Tusk's grandfathers were in concentration camps. Sensing that the attack exceeded the public's sense of the limits of decency, Kaczynski distanced himself from Kurski and PiS subsequently expelled him from the party. Initial poll results suggest Kaczynski lost ground in the attack, after having gained steadily on Tusk in the days before the October 9 first round. Despite the dust-up, Prime Minister-designate Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz assured Ambassador that officials from both parties are quietly working behind the scenes, and will be ready to launch their coalition government in the days following the decisive presidential election. End Summary.

Dirty Campaign Tactics
Backfire, Hurting Kaczynski

¶12. (U) Jacek Kurski, a recently elected Sejm deputy and widely credited as the mastermind of PiS's parliamentary victory, was expelled from his party yesterday after he floated a story to the press that the grandfather of PO's Donald Tusk volunteered for the German Wehrmacht in World War II. The head of Tusk's campaign, Jacek Protasiewicz, accused Kurski of casting aspersions on Tusk and his family and presented documents from 1947 that proved that his grandfathers not only were not volunteers for the Wehrmacht, but were actually imprisoned in German concentration camps during the war. Kurski on October 13 apologized for his error.

¶13. (C) Kurski is described in local press as an "expert in black PR," and the public reaction suggest many view his statements as a blow beneath the belt, and that the tactic has hurt Kaczynski. The latest polls indicate Tusk is widening his lead over Kaczynski to fourteen points. Kurski earlier criticized Tusk for welcoming "home" a German visitor who was born in Gdansk. Such veiled comments reflect a kind of coded language suggesting that Poles living in the Gdansk region are somehow less patriotic, a tactic not acceptable to many Poles. Already a stronghold for Tusk and the PO, Kurski's latest comments may backfire, hurting him generally and bringing out even more voters in Gdansk and the surrounding Pomorskie province. Kaczynski distanced himself from Kurski a day after the attack, but has been criticized for saying too little, too late. PiS insider Marek Jurek expressed dismay about Kaczynski's prospects in a conversation with us a few days after the episode.

¶14. (SBU) While censuring Kurski, however, in a political tit for tat, PiS spokesman Michal Kaminski slammed PO's health care program saying the "liberals (want a system wherein) when the ambulance arrives at the site of an accident, the doctor will ask the victim for his or her credit card number." PiS presidential candidate Lech Kaczynski also announced he would refuse to meet with PO official and close Tusk lieutenant, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Walz who has been leading the public attack on Kaczynski, saying he slashed funding to Warsaw-area hospices and diverted the funds to produce glitzy brochures touting investment opportunities in Warsaw, that appeared days before the October 9 first round of the presidential elections. As reported reftel, Gronkiewicz-Walz has an eye on Lech Kaczynski's current job as mayor of Warsaw.

¶15. (U) Marek Borowski, the losing candidate from the Social Democratic Party (SDPL) who placed fourth in last weekend's first electoral round, offered a back-handed endorsement to Tusk on October 13 when he said his voters should not back Lech Kaczynski. Andrzej Lepper, who placed third in the

first presidential round, announced he had written to both Tusk and Kaczynski to ask about their policies, and openly angled for the position of Sejm Marshall (equivalent to Speaker of the House). His chances for succeeding in that effort are virtually nil.

Government Formation Negotiations
Go Quietly Forward Despite
Bitter Campaign

16. (C) Despite the bitter campaign, teams from the two parties continue to work behind the scenes on building the new government. PiS Deputy Marek Jurek, who is on the negotiating team, told DCM and PolCounts October 13 that meetings continue, and that the two parties are well on their way to putting together alternate slates of ministers. He suggested that if Tusk wins, Jarek Kaczynski could end up as Speaker of the Sejm, whereas if Lech Kaczynski is President, PO member Bronislaw Komorowski might be Speaker. Prime Minister-designate Kazimierz Marcikiewicz also reassured Ambassador in an October 14 that work on government formation was proceeding apace and that there was "goodwill" on both sides despite the heated campaign. Neither would say anything about who was being considered for what position, and no concrete new rumors have emerged in the past week. Jurek said that the teams were working on not just ministerial, but also deputy ministerial positions, and said that the second and some of the third tier positions would be filled at the same time as ministers are announced. Both were confident that a new government would be named by the end of October, and reminded us that it would begin working immediately.

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